

As delivered

**Remarks by Ambassador William Swing
U.S. Government Candidate for Director General of the International
Organization for Migration**

Reception Hosted By Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte

**Washington, DC
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Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

I appreciate your kind and far too generous introduction. I am grateful for the confidence that the Secretary and you have shown in nominating me as the U.S. candidate for Director General of the International Organization for Migration.

Your Excellencies,

I have had the honor of meeting a number of you here in Washington, or your colleagues in Geneva; or in your respective capitals. I am deeply honored and humbled by your presence here this evening.

I. Migration as a Global Concern:

Since January when I concluded my five-year UN peacekeeping mandate in the Congo, I have been traveling around the world to listen to government officials and experts' views on migration. The subject of migration used to be confined to experts at universities and think tanks. Today Migration is a staple topic of speeches by politicians, newspaper articles and editorials, and a constant concern of policy-makers. Both the volume of migrants and the visibility of the issue are soaring, as witnessed by the large increase in IOM membership – which has doubled over the past few years to 122 Member States today.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, we live in an era of the greatest human mobility since the mass migration at the beginning of the 20th century. In fact, more people may be on the move today than ever before in the history of mankind. There are nearly 200 million migrants worldwide. If migrants constituted themselves as a nation, for example, it would be one of the ten largest countries in the world.

Migrants constitute 20% of the population in 41 countries – and account for 10% or more of GDP in a number of others.

About half of all migrants are female.

One in every five migrants lives in the United States.

Finally, the amount of money migrants send back home – so-called 'remittances'—is three or four times greater than the total amount of global foreign aid.

But Migration also has a darker, negative side, e.g.:

traffickers and smugglers are increasingly extorting migrants, many of whom lose their lives at the hands of traffickers and smugglers;

With 800,000 victims annually, trafficking is nothing less than a form of modern-day slavery.

II. IOM More Relevant than Ever

Given this as a backdrop, it would seem that IOM – as the only global agency addressing the scope and complexity of migration – is more relevant today than at any other time in its entire 57 year history. It is important therefore that IOM strengthen its position as the pre-eminent leader in the migration field.

IOM's overarching objective must be to help Member States in insuring that migration benefits all concerned – countries of origin, transit and destination, and of course the migrants themselves, first and foremost. We must all focus on the quality and safety of the migration experience. This means, among other things, linking migration to development, and protecting the human rights of all migrants, including those who are undocumented. We must support capacity building activities that ensure effective, humane migration management.

Although IOM is the lead global agency for migration, the scope and complexity of the migration issue are such that no one organization can address all of its challenges and prospects alone. IOM must therefore work cooperatively, not competitively, with others and respect their mandates and institutional integrity. IOM can serve as a catalyst and a collection point for “lessons learned” and “best practices” that can be adapted to various national contexts.

III. IOM Leadership Requirements

In conclusion, the requirements of an IOM leader at this crucial period in a time of increased mobility would seem to be the following:

First, someone who recognizes that this organization belongs to Member States and therefore will ensure total transparency and regular consultation with all Members;

Second, someone who has recent experience in managing a large, multi-dimensional organization, highly decentralized and field-focused, and with a substantial budget.

Third, someone who attaches the highest importance to establishing and maintaining close professional rapport and cooperation with the UN, other organizations, partners and beneficiaries.

And fourth, someone who is committed to the overarching objective of managing migration to the benefit of all: the migrant, as well as the source, transit and receiving countries; and increasing national capacity to do so humanely and effectively.

As delivered

This is what I aspire to offer if elected, and this is my vision for IOM: a collaborative organization of serious professionals built on trust – an organization that listens to member states, and efficiently and cost-effectively meets the needs of its members and its beneficiaries.

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